A CHRISTIAN'S Sure Anchor and Comfort in Times of Troubles and Dangers.

BEING A

SERMON

Preached on the 16. day of *June*.

By a Divine of the Church of *England*.

Ἣν ὡς ἄγκυραν ἔχομεν, ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ βεβαίαν. *Heb.* 6. 19.

Similiter quomodo Anchoram habemus Navim in Tempestate Maris, sic spes Hominem in Tentationibus mundi fundat. *Sedul. Comment. in Lucam.*

It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God, Lam. 3. 26.

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CHRISTIANS

Sure Anchor *and* Comfort

In Times of

Troubles *and* Dangers.

Rom. xii. 12.

Rejoycing in Hope.

THe Condition of Man in this World is such, that he often meets with many things which cause trouble and vexation of Spirit; and the best of Men are not secure from such evills, but as liable as others to be afflicted with them. The Wisdom of God sees it fit very frequently to lay heavy burdens of afflictions upon his own Servants, to let

them be intangled in the nets of wicked Men, to be caught in the Briars of Tribulation, and to make them pass through the Fiery Trial of Persecution: And were it not that they had a prospect of Deliverance from such Miseries, and of a Blessed Reward, after they have patiently endured for a while, they would sink under the weight of such Calamities: but when they consider that the things wherein they find present trouble, and sorrow, are design'd for their Advantage another way, that they will have a speedy and a happy end; and that God has prepar'd unspeakeable Joy, Rest, and Peace, to succeed these Miseries, and to reward the Courage and Patience of those, who bear them with Submission and Resignation to his will: These thoughts beget Joy and comfort in their Souls, and make them esteem themselves happy in those circumstances, wherein to the Eye of the World they appear most miserable. The hope of what is to come makes their present afflictions seem light and turns their heavines into Joy. The Expectation of

Gods

Gods gracious Deliverance out of their troubles, and the blessedness of a future Life which they are assured of, does overballance all the thoughts of their present hardships and ill treatments in the World, and makes them look on 'em as matter of joy, and not of grief.

Such a hope as this, which causeth Rejoycing, is that which St. *Paul* speaks of in this place; a hope of heavenly Felicity wherewith God hath promised to reward the good Services, the Sufferings, and Constancy of pious Christians. With this hope he bids these Christians to comfort themselves, and rejoyce in it. And this Advice was very proper for their condition: for they had then many Enemies and Persecutors who hated them and their Religion, and brought great calamaties upon 'em, not suffering them to rest and enjoy a peaceable Life, because they had embrac'd and did constantly profess the Doctrine of Christianity which by the Ignorant and unconverted World was then every where spoken against.

In this afflicted persecuted State they

had need of encouragement, to make them to persevere in the Love and profession of that Truth, for which they then suffered. And how does the Apostle encourage them? He bids 'em Hope, He advises 'em to look forward upon the Blessedness of a Future Life, the Joys and Glories of Eternity, and to expect them as their portion, and Reward of their Sufferings: And so in respect of this Felicity to come, which God had assur'd them of, to rejoyce in the midst of all their worldly troubles, knowing that these would not last long, and that the End of 'em would be peace.

One would have thought it a very unreasonable Exhortation, to bid those Christians Rejoyce, who had then so much Cause to be sorrowful; when they suffer'd so many reproaches, underwent so many hardships, and were in all respects so spitefully treated by their Enemies. But in the worst of times and Conditions, Christianity has wherewithal to comfort its Professors, and make their Hearts joyful: and this is one of those

Spiritual

Spiritual Comforts, *viz.* the Hope of Everlasting Happineſs; this outweighs the heavieſt burden of worldly Calamities, and gives us a chearful Spirit in the midſt of our greateſt Sufferings. For, when we have this hope, we conſider, not ſo much what we are at preſent, as what we ſhall be; we are the leſs concern'd at the Evils we ſuffer in this World, becauſe we ſee beyond 'em, and do expect a Bliſsful State where we ſhall ſuffer no more; where we ſhall have no more Sorrow, and where all Tears ſhall be wip'd off from our Eyes.

Since therefore ſuch a hope as this is ſo uſeful and beneficial to us in our Chriſtian courſe, I ſhall make it my buſineſs at this time to ſhew you,

Firſt, The Nature of it.

Secondly, What you muſt do to get it.

And *Thirdly*, Of what uſe and advantage it will be to you at all times, but eſpecially in Adverſity, and when you are under ſuch Trials as theſe Chriſtians heretofore were.

I. Hope (as it is a Christian Grace) is nothing else but a comfortable Expectation of the fulfilling of Gods Promises, belonging to this life, or that to come. Here in my Text the Apostle speaks of hope as it respects the Promises of God belonging to a future Life.

By this Description of Hope which I have given you, the Nature of it does appear, and also the objects and the ground of it.

As for the Nature of it, tis an expectation and earnest looking for of something to come. *For hope that is seen is not hope,* (saith the Apostle) *for what a Man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.* Rom. 8. 24, 25. So that it must be something Future, about which our hope is employed.

And then for the Object of it, that is always some good thing, which we believe we shall be the better for, and will, in some measure conduce to our happiness for we never hope for things that will hurt us, and make us miserable; but

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on the contrary deprecate all ſuch evills, and wiſh they may never come upon us Again.

If we conſider the ground of this Hope, it is built upon the promiſe of God, which he has made to pious Men concerning things to come, concerning the Felicity of a Future State; Now theſe Promiſes of God being a moſt ſure and certain ground, our hope that is built upon them muſt be ſo too. And herein this Grace of Hope differs from all other expectations, which have no other Foundation but the words or Promiſes of Men, who ſometimes want Power, and ſometimes Will to perform what they promiſe: and ſo the hopes of them who depend upon them muſt needs be uncertain. But God is powerful to do whatever he promiſes, and he is true and juſt and will never fail nor deceive thoſe, who put their confidence in his word. *Thy word is true from Everlaſting*, ſays the Pſalmiſt. *He is faithful that hath promiſed*, ſays the Apoſtle. So that the Hope of Chriſtians for

for Heavenly bliſs is as well grounded as it can be, in that it is bottom'd upon the moſt ſure and infallible promiſes of God.

Now an Eternal heavenly Life being the beſt thing we hope for, we are moſt unwilling to be diſappointed of it, becauſe ſuch a diſappointment of the greateſt Felicity would make us moſt miſerable. We therefore deſire to have it ſecur'd to us, and made as certain as poſſible: and ſo it is; we are as certain of it as the Promiſes of God can make us; and if there be nothing of Fallibility or deceit in them (as certainly there is not,) then are we as ſure as we can be of Future happineſs, and our hopes grounded upon thoſe promiſes are moſt rational, certain, and full of Comfort.

Take away this hope from Men, and and what are they then but wretched Creatures, tho they have all the felicity this World affords? for 'tis not all the wealth and glory of the Earth, that can bear up Mens Spirits, and make them comfortable, under a deſpair of Heaven.

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The thoughts of not inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven will take away all the delight and comfort of Earthly poſſeſſions. Whatever we have here, 'tis as nothing to us, if we have not hopes of enjoying ſomthing better hereafter. Yea, when this hope of Heaven is not quite deſtroyed, but only deſſen'd or weaken'd by ſome doubts and fears; what a trouble is this to us, and how witleſs are our minds, whilſt thoſe doubts and Fears remain! my next work therefore is to ſhew you, how to have the joy and comfort of a ſure and well grounded hope.

II. You have heard that the Promiſes of God are the ground of this hope of Everlaſting Life: Now, that which gives us a right to thoſe Promiſes and an int'reſt in them, does alſo make us partakers of this hope. How then do we come to have an int'reſt in the priviledges of Felicity, but by performing the conditions upon which thoſe promiſes are made. Thoſe Conditions are propos'd to us in the

the Gospel, *viz.* Faith, Repentance and Christian Obedience: In general a pious and Religious Life *answerable* to the Gospel Rules. Upon Condition of such a Christian behaviour God hath promis'd us Eternal Life; and if we are qualify'd with such a behaviour, we may hope; and be confident, that God will perform his promise of Blessedness to us. But, because men are apt to deceive themselves with false hopes of heart, it concerns us to know, when this hope is true and when 'tis false.

For our Direction and Information in this particular, St. *John* has given us a certain rule, whereby to know this. *Every man that hath this hope purifieth himself.* 1 Ep. 3. V. 3. *i. e.* He lives a pure and virtuous life, abhorring the filthiness of Vice and Impiety. For he considers that the promises of Felicity are conditional, and that God is not bound to perform them unless they do their Duty; and so they endeavour to discharge that by living as purely and piously as they can, that

that nothing may be wanting on their parts to hinder them from obtaining the promiſed happineſs of the World to come. Thus a true hope is diſcernible from any other, by a holy Chriſtian converſation which always attends it.

So that when a man reflects upon his Life, and finds that he ſincerely endeavours to pleaſe God by holy obedience, by a ſtrict, innocent pure converſation, and upon that, hopes to be ſav'd, and enjoy the promis'd Reward of Gods heavenly Kingdom, his hope is then ſure and well grounded, he hopes for nothing but what the Goſpel encourages, and God commands him to hope for.

But, that others do hope for Heaven and the glories of it, who have not ſufficient ground and warrant for ſuch an expectation, is certain, and commonly to be obſerv'd. Men that do not purifie themſelves, nor take any care to reform their lives, and adorn them with Chriſtian vertues; but on the contrary indulge themſelves in all vitious impurities and Unchriſtian practices, even

these do hope nevertheless to be sav'd, and boldly lay claim to the promises of Eternal happiness.

But tho these do so, their Claim is not just, nor their hope rational: yea, 'tis not so properly Hope, as Presumption; an expectation of some good, which a Man has no good ground nor Reason to expect. Such is the hope of all ungodly Men, that take pleasure in Sin, and hate to be reform'd, and we are expressly told in Holy Scriptures *that their Hope shall perish.*

What good then can it do them to hope for that, which they are never like to obtain, and that which it is against all Reason for them to expect. They do but deceive themselves by such false and groundless hopes; and this is a very pernicious way of deceiving themselves too: for when they presume they shall be happy and go to Heaven, tho they live impiously; They go on in that Presumption, and never take care to reform their lives; and so at last *come to a fearful end, and dye in their Sins.*

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And therefore such persons as are thus bold and forward to declare their hope of Heaven, should consider the Danger of such a destructive confidence, and not ruin themselves into ruine by a false and flattering hope of being sav'd.

Methinks it should be easie to reason such Men out of their vain Confidence, yea, they might easily reason themselves out of it. For thus a Man might say to himself I am told in Holy Scriptures, 'that there is such a blessing as Eternal 'Life. I find every where that God has 'promis'd this Blessing only to them that 'live piously. If then I am none of those 'pious ones, to whom those promises are 'particularly made; how can I expect to 'have a share in that Felicity? If God 'has promis'd it to none, but to such 'as Love and Obey him; He has not 'not promis'd it to me who am none of 'that Number: And if I am none of that 'Number included in the promise, I 'am very unreasonable to think or hope 'I shall be happy with them; I am 'Presumptus to expect the Blessing

'without performing the Duty requir'd
'in order thereunto. I promise my self
'that I shall be happy, but my promise
'is nothing without Gods promise:
'This I have not, therefore the other
'can do me no good. I do hope, but
'I have no ground for my hope; and
'so it can be but a vain expectation, and
'I shall surely deceive my self by it, and
'instead of a Blessing I shall in the end
'meet with a miserable Disappointment.
'Yea, it is yet more reasonable for me
'to think so; because I hope not onely
'without any promise of God to encourage
'me, but also against the Express Word of
'God in his many Threatnings and De-
'nuntiations of misery to such wretched
'and Unreform'd Sinners as I am: Ei-
'ther God saies true, in those threat-
'nings, or he does not: If he does, (as
'is most certainly to be believ'd) then
'what reason can I have to hope, I
'shall be sav'd, tho I continue in my Sins,
'when God saies the contrary? Can I
'be happy whether he will or no? Can
'I force my way into Heaven? And

take

'take poſſeſſion of that glorious Inhe-
'ritance? I cannot be ſo fooliſh to think
'ſo, and therefore the reſult of all is
'this, That before I can have a ſure,
'and rational, and well-grounded hope
'I muſt reform my wicked life, and re-
'ſolve *to ſerve God in Holineſs and Righte-*
'*ouſneſs all my dayes*; then, and not till
'then, ſhall I be able to hope for Hea-
'ven with any Comfort and Aſſurance.
After this manner therefore let us reaſon
with our ſelves, and by this means we
ſhall perceive our Folly and Danger, in re-
lying upon weak and unwarantable Foun-
dations, and in flattering our ſelves with
vain hopes of Heaven, while our viti-
ous Converſations carry us directly to-
ward Hell.

By what I have ſaid ſo plainly on
this point you cannot but underſtand,
when your hope of Heaven is true and
when falſe; when it has good Founda-
tion, and when it has none. And therefore
unleſs you are willing to cheat your ſelves
you cannot be deceived in this matter.
Conſider your lives what they are, and

thence judge of your hopes: If they be good and comformable to the Rules of Christian Piety, then is your Hope warrantably grounded; if they be wicked your hope is vain and deceitful. 'Tis, true wicked men may hope for the Fruition of a better life, but it is upon this supposition, that they first change their manners and live Religiously: but while they remain wicked, and resolve never to be otherwise, their trusting in God, and hoping for his mercy and Salvation, is no Virtue, but a great Sin, 'tis a presumptuous dependance which God is never pleas'd with. It is a peice of high Injustice to expect and lay claim to that whereto they have no right. Let us be sure therefore to lay a good Foundation for our hope, that in the end we may not be disappointed. 'Tis of the greatest concernment to us to endeavour not to be deceiv'd in this matter. He that lives well may hope well; as for others, their Expectations are Vain.

III Let us now see of what use this Christi-

Christian hope is to those that have it, and what advantages men receive by it. It serves to many good purposes:

First, At all times it encourages men to serve God diligently, chearfully, and constantly: For when we have a prospect of so great Happiness as is prepar'd in the Kingdom of Heaven, and have hope of enjoying it, upon Condition we carefully perform our Christian Duties. We think it well worth our labour to qualifie our selves for that highest Felicity, by conforming to God's Will in all points of holy obedience. For the hope that is set before us, we think it not reasonable to grudge the performance of any thing that is in our power: This makes Religious Duties more easie and pleasant to us: We set about them with chearfulness, when we hope for so great a Reward after we have done 'em. Thus as a good Life encourages us to hope, so that hope encourages to persevere in a good Life.

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2. The Hope of Heaven and Eternal Joys makes men put a just estimate upon things here below, and not to overvalue, or too much love this present World. For, when men have such excellent and eternal enjoyments in their Eye and Expectation, they make no great account of earthly transitory things, nor settle their affections upon them; but passing by these lesser matters, aspire with the greatest ardour of affection after those enjoyments wherein they are sure of perfect Satisfaction, and of which they are never to be dispossess'd.

Whereas we see other men whose hopes of future blessedness is either very languishing, or who have none at all, to be very solicitous about the World, to love it excessively, and to prize it as their chief Felicity. They mind not the things of Eternity, because they want this hope to elevate their minds and draw them off from the World. Happy then are they, who have this hope, which makes them mind and regard most the things that are most regardable, and keeps

keeps them from being Slaves to the World, and overprizing Vanities and trifling enjoyments.

3*dly*. In all afflictions and worldly adversities this Hope comforts and supports us: Whatever our condition be, how deplorable soever our circumstances in the World; yet we are not dejected, we cannot think our selves unhappy, while we have this Hope. For whatever our troubles and sufferings are, our hope of being deliver'd from them, and enjoying a State of perfect Peace and Happiness afterwards, makes us bear 'em patiently and chearfully. If we are hated and evil-entreated in the World; if we Suffer Poverty, Shame, Reproach, or any thing else, that the malice of wicked men can bring upon us, we are the less mov'd at these things, because if we suffer 'em upon a good account, we are sure we shall be gainers by 'em, and in that respect we can look upon 'em as matter of rejoycing, as the Apostles and primitive Christians did who

rejoyced that they were counted worthy to suffer in a good cause, for the Name of Christ, and the Sake of true Religion. This St. Paul declares, Rom. 5,2,3,4,5. *We rejoyce in the hope of the glory of God. And not onely so but we glory in Tribulation also, knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope; and Hope maketh not ashamed.*

Men who have this Hope of the Glory of God will never be ashamed of those Sufferings, which they know are the way to it: But for the Sake of *that eternal weight of Glory*, which they hope for, will rejoyce in them. And thus St. Paul advised these Christians, *To rejoyce in this Hope, and to be patient in Tribulation*, both which are here joyn'd together. This was nothing but what their Saviour had done before, who for the *Joy that was set him, endured the Cross despising the shame.* And unless *we take up our Cross and follow him*, (When 'tis necessary so to do,) He tells us we *are not worthy of him.* To him therefore

Let

let us look in all our Sufferings as to the *Author and Finisher of our Faith*, as to the true Promiser of Heavenly Glory, and not be ashamed to tread in those holy Steps of his which will surely lead us to a blessed Eternity, and bring us to Sit down with him at the right hand of God. If ever we should come to be in such Circumstances as these Christians were, when St. *Paul* gave 'em this Exhortation, if we should be persecuted for Christs Sake, and Suffer the Hatred of the World for our adherance to the truth; if we should be depriv'd of our Goods, of our Liberty, and all that we esteem of in this World: Let us not be asham'd to Suffer, nor murmur at our Condition, but on the contrary, rejoyce and glory in such sufferings, *which are indeed the shame of our Enemies, but our glory who endure 'em.* Let us hope, to the end and Comfort our selves with the many promises of a Blessed Reward. *Holding fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, knowing that he is Faithful that has promis'd, and*

being well assur'd, that *he will abundantly recompence all that we Suffer for him, And for our light afflictions which are but for a moment, will reward us with an eternal and exceeding weight of Glory.*

Now to, &c.

FINIS.

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